

Adoption News

A quarterly newsletter from

Adoptions From The Heart



Adoptee Donates Birthday Gift Money to Adoptions From The Heart



In 2004, Mark and Mary-Jean grew their family through the AFTH China Program when they adopted their daughter, Mia. Their family blossomed and the couple then decided to go through the program again, adopting their daughter Celia in 2007. Mia and Celia's parents raised two beautiful and

upstanding young ladies, most recently evidenced by Mia's 13th birthday.

Leading up to her 13th birthday, Mia wanted to do something different, something special. She didn't want her friends and family to give her gifts. She felt the generosity of her loved ones could be put to better use. Mia told her parents that she wanted to ask her family and friends to contribute money instead of giving her birthday presents, and she would then donate that money to a great cause. Her father and mother also remarked that "in the last year, she [Mia] has really been thinking outside herself." This decision only further illustrates Mia's kind heart.

After spending some time trying to decide which cause Mia wanted to donate her birthday money to, it finally struck her. She heard an Adoptions From The Heart advertisement on the radio. She decided to donate the funds to the AFTH Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund. This would help expecting and birth parents in need, both before and after placement of their child. Mia, an adoptee herself, thought long and hard about where she wanted to send her generosity. AFTH felt honored to accept her gift and will put it to good use helping others in need.

On a rainy Wednesday in July, Mia and her family brought smiles to the AFTH employees. They stopped by to tell Mia's story and donate her gift. Everyone felt touched to see that level of compassion in such a young woman, her parents included. They were so proud they decided to match the donations Mia received, doubling her donation to the fund.

One social worker at AFTH spoke up during the visit to explain what

Summer 2016

In This Issue

- 2 Adoptee's Donation
- 3 Brava SmartCEO Award
- 4 Dear Dedicated Supporters
- 5 Open Adoption Story
- 6 Recent Legistaltion
- 6 Book Reviews
- 7 Live United!
- 7 Seeking Paper Heart Holders
- 8 Domestic Update
- 9 Transracial Adoption Class
- 9 Potbelly Partnership
- 10 International News
- 11 AFTH Support Groups
- 11 New AFTH Families

Special Insert:

- Summer Picnic Recaps
- Upcoming AFTH Classes
- AFTH Fall Gatherings



Locations

Allentown Office

2212 Union Blvd. Allentown, PA 18109

610.432.2384

Central PA Office

1525 Oregon Pike, Suite 402 Lancaster, PA 17601

717.399.7766

Connecticut Office

703 Hebron Ave. 1st Floor Glastonbury, CT 06033

860.657.2626

Delaware Office

18-A Trolley Square Wilmington, DE 19806

302.658.8883

New Jersey Office

451 Woodland Ave. Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

856.665.5655

New York

800.355.5500

Philadelphia Office

30-31 Hampstead Circle Wynnewood, PA 19096

610.642.7200

Pittsburgh Office

1225 S. Main St. Suite 207 Greensburg, PA 15601

724.853.6533

Virginia Office

1407 Stephanie Way, Suite H
Chesapeake, VA 23320

757.361.0008

Toll Free: 800.355.5500

Website: www.afth.org

Mia's \$700 donation really meant. "We've had expecting mothers who don't have a mattress to sleep on. Through the kindness of people like you, we are able to help these people be safe and healthy during and after what is already the most difficult time in their lives."

In addition to donating her birthday gift, Mia and her family spent time chatting with AFTH employees. They also posed for a picture with AFTH Assistant Director, Heidi Gonzalez, and Coordinator of International Services, Roberta Evantash. Evantash, a social worker who served as the China Program Coordinator, initially helped bring the family together. Mia's family shared that she is excited to continue her philanthropic work. She has already spent time volunteering at the local preschool she attended as a child. This summer she is also heading to the Bahamas for a mission trip! Thank you to Mia, her family, and all those who help support the Expecting and Birth Parent Fund, the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund, and the Adoptions From the Heart mission.

If you are interested in learning more about the AFTH Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund, visit www.afth.org/support-our-mission.

AFTH Founder Maxine Chalker Honored with Smart CEO 'Brava Award'



Adoptions From The Heart is excited to announce that Executive Director, Maxine Chalker, is a winner of the 2016 Smart CEO Magazine's Brava Award!

"The Brava Awards program celebrates high-impact female business leaders in three categories: CEOs, Executive Directors of Nonprofits, and C-suite executives. Brava award winners combine their irrepressible entrepreneurial spirit with a passion for giving back to the community, and are exemplary leaders of both their companies and their communities. They encourage local philanthropy, mentor up-and-coming leaders and set their companies on the path to tremendous growth. Each year, an independent committee of local business leaders selects winners based on company growth, community impact and mentoring. SmartCEO shares their inspiring stories in SmartCEO magazine and celebrates their success at a high-energy awards gala."

Chalker's dedication to creating a solid business model for the agency while also supporting its clients is what has earned her this prestigious award. Her drive for programs like the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund, providing assistance to those in need during or after pregnancy, sets her apart from most. Her involvement in the local Main Line and Philadelphia communities shows her love for not only the home of her agency, but the people and places in and around it. Chalker shared, "I have worked hard to create an agency with a mission that strives beyond just placing children for adoption by supporting all members of the adoption triad

through ongoing contact and open communication. Earning this award is flattering but there is always more we can do to help improve adoption practices locally and around the country."

Heidi Gonzalez, Assistant Director at AFTH and daughter of Maxine Chalker shared, "I am so proud of what my mother has achieved so far, because we all know she isn't done yet! She founded Adoptions From The Heart in the hope of making adoption better for all parties involved and she continues to strive for new ways to improve the lives of women and children." These are practices Gonzalez plans to continue to preserve her mother's legacy. She has already started to do this with her innovation of programs such as the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund, helping birth parents get back on their feet by awarding them with funds to go to trade school or university.



Chalker received her award at The Crystal Tea Room in Philadelphia, PA. Board member McKenzie Ann Frankel of Entrust Financial LLC attended and accepted the award on Chalker's behalf.

Maxine and Heidi Brava Award Celebration

About a week after receiving the award, board members, employees, and other close friends got together for a happy hour event at Tango Bistro in Bryn Mawr, PA, to celebrate Chalker's accomplishments.



Adoptions From The Heart

adoption@afh.org | www.afh.org | Maxine Chalker, MSW/LSW, Executive Director

Dear Dedicated Supporters,

As I began my thirty first year as Executive Director, Adoptions From The Heart entered its fourth decade pursuing our mission to provide safe, loving homes for children and to offer comprehensive, high quality services to expecting parents, adoptive families and children. I am honored to say that Adoptions From The Heart has helped build over 6,600 beautiful families all across the USA with our numbers growing each day.

Being an adoptee myself, I have been particularly inspired by families dedicated to open adoption and I've enclosed one of their personal stories to share with you. I am reaching out to you because we share a special passion for those connected to adoption and helping those in need.

Your participation now helps us to provide for the needs of those we are currently working with, have worked with in the past and will work with in the future. I assure you that every donation counts, no matter the size. Making your tax-deductible gift today will make a difference tomorrow. You can choose to designate your gift to the cause that is most meaningful to you,

- Expecting & Birth Parent Support Fund – helps men and & women considering adoption with housing, food, travel and basic needs. Provides gift cards to families who have placed children and are already parenting other children with gift cards for the holidays.
- Birth Parent Scholarship Fund – provides birth parents with scholarships to pursue their education goals whether or not they have worked with Adoptions From The Heart.
- Greatest Need – donations will be used where they are needed most

Thank you for your participation in this journey of generosity.

Sincerely,

Maxine Chalker, MSW/LSW
Founder & Executive Director

PS. Follow us on Facebook and through our newsletter to see how your contributions made an impact on those touched by adoption.

30-31 Hampstead Circle, Wynnewood, PA 19096 | 2212 Union Boulevard, Allentown, PA 18109 | 1525 Oregon Pike, Suite 402, Lancaster, PA 17601
18A Trolley Square, Wilmington, DE 19806 | 451 Woodland Avenue, Cherry Hill, NJ 08002 | 1225 South Main Street, Suite 207, Greensburg, PA 15601
1407 Stephanie Way, Suite H, Chesapeake, VA 23320 | 703 Hebron Avenue, 1st Floor, Glastonbury, CT 06033

Two Families Connected By Love Through Open Adoption

When Kristy and David decided to expand their family of four through adoption they had one important desire. “What we wanted even more than to get ‘the call’ was for our future child’s birthparents to be given the upmost respect and care and in their times of feeling lost and alone to have someone that would be there to help in any way they needed.”

Around that same time, Jessica discovered she was pregnant and knew she had to make a difficult decision for her baby girl. “It was such a bitter sweet day for me. Bitter because I was making an incredibly painful decision that would forever have a huge impact on my life. Sweet because I would grow to love a beautiful and helpful couple by the name of David and Kristy who would give Regan all I had hoped.”



Kristy and David welcome their daughter's birthmother Jessica along with her mother and 2 year old daughter to Regan's 1st birthday.

Two families, once strangers, brought together to share an astonishing love for one very special little girl as well as for each other.

Kristy and David began the adoption process in the hopes of having a very open adoption. Kristy even envisioned getting together for holidays and gathering around the Thanksgiving table together. Their contact was initially limited to updates and photos that were passed on to Jessica. However, as she became more comfortable over time and realized the family's commitment to open adoption, she welcomed even more communication. Now they text, email, share photos and videos on social media and have exchanged phone numbers and addresses. Kristy and David also stay connected to Regan's birth grandmother as well.

Within the last year, they have gotten together several times with plans to visit again this month. “It's the most unexplainable thing, to love someone so much before you have ever had the chance to meet them,” Kristy says about the time prior to their first visit. “And then that moment when we first met, we just didn't want to let go of each other! There was so much joy but also so much sorrow.” David agrees, “It was a tough experience for everyone seeing the joy and pain in Jessica's eyes.” Even though saying goodbye is hard, Jessica knows that they will hold true in their commitment to open adoption.

Jessica has moved into her own apartment with her three children and on top of working a full time job has dedicated herself to pursuing her nursing degree. She was overjoyed when she received gift cards through AFTH's Expecting & Birth Parent Support Fund and has said what a blessing they were to her family. As a birthmother who is now furthering her education, Jessica has expressed how important funds like AFTH's Birthparent Scholarship are to help give an extra boost of encouragement and financial assistance to help other birthparents just like her to reach their goal.

“For us, it's about love. We are trying to do the very best for our daughter and that includes open adoption. Our family didn't increase by just one through adoption and we are so grateful to have Jessica and her family in our lives.”



Recent Legislation

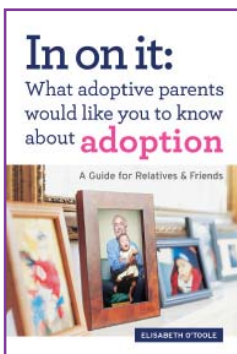
ALABAMA - In March, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed an Alabama Supreme Court decision that declined to recognize a second-parent adoption granted by a Georgia court to a lesbian mother who had raised her partner's three biological children from birth.

INDIANA - On March 4th, Governor Mike Pence of Indiana signed a bill into law that allows adopted persons from Indiana's closed records period to access their original birth certificates.

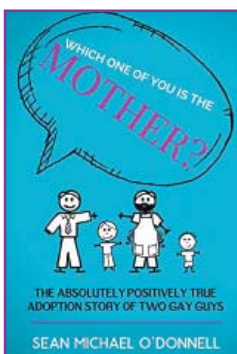
PENNSYLVANIA - HB 162 has stalled in the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare. This bill would restore the rights of PA-born adoptees to have a copy of their original birth certificate, a right they had until 1984 when the law was changed. **CALL TO ACTION:** Help get this bill back on track. Reach out to your local PA Senators and push for adoptees in PA to have the same rights as every other citizen. Additionally, contact Senator Vance (vance@pasen.gov) and urge her of the importance on getting this bill back on track to being passed.

Additionally, House Bill 1529 which is currently pending in the Senate Judiciary Committee would allow for prospective adoptive parents to pay for a PA expecting mother's living expenses which was previously not allowed.

Book Reviews



In On It: What Adoptive Parents Would Like Your To Know About Adoption. A Guide for Relatives and Friends by Elizabeth O'Toole - This book is smart, thoughtful and full of humor. O'Toole guides readers through adoption – and all the unique stuff that accompanies parenting in a family with adopted children. *In On It* opens a path for friends and relatives to become insiders to the process and is a great resource for people who want to support their loved ones, but aren't always sure what to do or say.



Which One of You is the Mother?: The Absolutely Positively True Adoption Story of Two Gay Dads by Sean O'Donnell - This is a quick, laugh out loud collection of essays written about how O'Donnell's life changed after adopting two children through foster care. He touches on the hoops he and his partner had to jump through, some of the feelings they faced when choosing certain criteria for their future children, and how it felt not knowing their children's history. Parenting changes your entire life and O'Donnell has some amazing insights into how wonderful and often underappreciated some of the changes are. This is a book that celebrates a different kind of family who just happens to be like every other family on the block.



*Carranza knows that Home is where the Heart is.
A very special thank you to our Platinum Picnic Sponsor!*



28th Annual Summer Picnic

On Saturday, June 18, AFTH hosted our Annual Picnic at Fort Washington State Park in Flourtown, PA. Despite the change in date for this year, a lot of people came out to celebrate the different types of families created through adoption. Adoptive parents, birth parents and adoptees gathering together for a day of fun in the park made for a beautiful sight.

Brand new this year, we had two of Philadelphia's most popular food trucks come. Not only was the food amazing, but these generous vendors donated up to 25% of sales to the AFTH Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund! We are looking forward to both Chef Donte's Delicious Dishes and Break Time Mobile Kitchen coming again next year.

Children and adults alike enjoyed dancing to live music from Egalitarian & Dinkendo Family Band and playing soccer and volleyball in the park. There were also tigers, fairies, and super heroes thanks to our wonderful face painters. Children spent time at the craft table, filled their bags with treats from the candy bar and picked out toys from the giveaway table to remember this wonderful day with their families.

This year's raffles were another huge hit. With a 50-50 raffle and over 15 baskets to choose from, there were plenty of fun opportunities to win with proceeds going to the AFTH Expecting & Birthmother Support Fund! There was even a vacation basket that gave the lucky winner a week-long stay of their choice from a list of over 100 relaxing destinations.

Because of the generosity of our sponsors, the event costs were covered and we were able to raise over \$1,400 for the Expecting and Birth Parent Fund.

Sponsor Shout Out



Family Portraits



Candy Bar



Band Performance

Virginia Picnic



The Chesapeake City Park Fun Forest was filled with lots of activity on June 4th from Noon-3pm. Families, children and birth parents gathered together with AFTH staff to

celebrate the bonds created through adoption. Over 100 people attended, 50 of whom were children, and staff were so excited to see 15 visits with children and birth parents (making it an even more eventful day). Families loved our new addition of having Gray Photography capture the special moments of the day with candid shots as well as family portraits. The raffle baskets were a big hit again this year raising over \$100 for the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund.

Connecticut Picnic

The AFTH Connecticut Office held their annual summer picnic at Wickham Park again and it was a gorgeous sunny day, for a change! We were happy to see so many adoptive and birth family reunions taking place and to hear how well the children are doing. Staff loves to get together with families for a special day celebrating adoption.



Bob Cermignano Air Conditioning and Heating - Ice Cream Truck

Admark360 - Face Painting

Keller Williams Real Estate - Crafts

Soccer Shots - Kid's Activity



Fall 2016 Adoption Education Series

Classes Designed Especially for the Needs of Adoptive Parents

Adoption is a lifelong journey, so regardless of what stage of the adoption process families are in, AFTH's goal is to strengthen families by empowerment through knowledge. Our Education Series is designed to offer support through educational opportunities and discussions to help better equip adoptive parents.

Mental Health Disorders and Prenatal Drug & Alcohol Exposure

Effects of Prenatal Drug & Alcohol Use (Wynnewood, PA)

Presenter Dr. Erin Meyer is an Internal Medicine and Pediatric Hospitalist who works in the NICU (*Neonatal Intensive Care Unit*) at Christiana Hospital. Together we will be discussing the effects of drug and alcohol use during pregnancy on the newborn. We will also discuss withdrawal symptoms and effects and will leave plenty of time for your questions.

Saturday, September 10th

from 10:30am-Noon

Register By September 2nd

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (610) 642-7200 with questions

Being Aware: Drugs, Alcohol, and Mental Illness in Birth Families (Henrico, VA)

Adoption is all about being aware and one day helping your child be aware as well. Join us as Ms. Robertson helps us to understand drugs, alcohol and mental illness concerns in birth families. Robertson is a licensed professional counselor who has lectured and published internationally on mental health and psychotherapy. She has extensive experience working with individuals who are challenged by addiction, anxiety, depression, psychosis, trauma and stress. She works with foster and adoptive youth, and their families, at Lutheran Family services in Newport News, and has a private practice in Norfolk.

Saturday, September 17th

from 11:00am-12:30pm

Register By September 10th

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (757) 381-0008 with questions

Substance Abuse During Pregnancy: Understanding Short/Long Term Effects (Bethlehem, PA)

Please join us in learning about the effects of substance abuse exposure during pregnancy. Time will be spent reviewing the profile key and answering any questions regarding the effects of substance use and abuse on the child. This is a great opportunity to educate yourself and spend time with a professional working in the field of maternal health. Light refreshments will be provided.

Saturday, September 10th

from 11:00am-1:00pm

Register By September 2nd

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (610) 432-2384 with questions

Substance Abuse During Pregnancy: Understanding Short/Long Term Effects (Brooklyn, NY)

Please join us in learning about the effects of substance abuse exposure during pregnancy with Dr. Melissa Goldstein, MD from Carnegie Hill Pediatrics. Dr. Goldstein's practice is partially devoted to adoption medicine and pre-adoption medical counseling. Time will be spent reviewing the profile key and answering any questions regarding the effect of substance use and abuse on the child.

Tuesday, September 27th

from 5:30-7:30pm

Register By September 20th

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (610) 432-2384 with questions



Child Care Classes

Infant Care Class for Adoptive Parents (Harrisburg, PA)

This infant care class especially for adoptive families will cover the basics of infant and child care including: newborn appearance, newborn behaviors, diapering and dressing, feeding, umbilical cord care, newborn health and safety basics, when to call your pediatrician as well as other changes that may come with new parenthood. This class is exclusively for prospective adoptive parents and allows them to learn in a non-medical environment without a focus on pregnancy and childbirth. There will be plenty of time for questions and for AFTH families, this class will count toward the agency's childcare requirement.

Monday, October 17th

from 6:30-8:30pm

Register By October 10th

\$25/person or \$35/couple

Call (717) 399-7766 with questions

Birthparent Panel

Birthparent Panel Discussion (Pittsburgh, PA)

Come and meet several courageous women who will share their stories of why they chose adoption. They will talk about their feelings throughout their pregnancies, what they experienced at the hospital, and their feelings after placement. Discussion will include why they chose their respective adoptive families, what their feelings are towards an open vs closed adoption, and what their hopes are for their future relationships with their children. Waiting families will learn more about the open adoption process and will gain a better understanding of the feelings of birthparents throughout the process

Saturday, September 17th

from 1:00-3:00pm

Register By September 9th

\$10/person or \$15/couple

Call (724) 853-6533 with questions

Special Opportunity

Transracial All-Day Ed Course (Bethlehem, PA)

This free course is specifically designed for AFTH families considering transracial adoption. See more details on page 9.

Saturday, October 1st

from 9:30 -4:00pm

in Bethlehem, PA

REGISTER ONLINE

LIMITED SPACE AVAILABLE

www.afth.org/education



AFTH Fall Gatherings

Gather together with AFTH staff and other adoptive and waiting families to celebrate the season. Keep an eye out for information about holiday gatherings from some of AFTH's other offices.

Fall Family Fun at Colonial Gardens in Phoenixville, PA

AFTH staff would love for you and your family to come to

Colonial Gardens in Phoenixville

October 15th from 10:30-Noon

Visit www.colonialgardenspa.com/pumpkin_land

Snacks and fall crafts will be provided and extra activities such as pumpkin picking, hayride, funhouse and corn maze are available for nominal fees.

[RSVP By October 7th to AshleyK@afth.org](mailto:AshleyK@afth.org)

Fall Festival in Lancaster, PA

Join AFTH staff and other waiting and placed families for a fun seasonal celebration. There will be activities for the children and some delicious goodies for everyone. We are asking for families to please bring a non-perishable food item for the local food bank.

Central PA Office in Lancaster

November 12th at 11:00am

[RSVP by November 4th to StephanieC@afth.org](mailto:StephanieC@afth.org)



National Adoption Month Pizza Party

Come and celebrate adoption by helping us to kick off National Adoption Month with our 2nd Annual Pizza Party. This event is designed for adoptive families with school-aged children so that adoptees can find support from peers their age and talk about adoption in a way that others can easily understand. During our time, parents and adoptees will form different groups so that everyone is able to feel free to speak about anything they might want to.

Virginia Office in Chesapeake

November 12th from Noon-1:30pm

[RSVP by November 9th to KimberlyR@afth.org](mailto:KimberlyR@afth.org)

United Way Giving Campaigns



United Way improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the common good and thousands of companies participate in the United Way Workplace Campaign each year.

Adoptions From The Heart is honored to be one of the non-profits eligible to receive contributions through the United Way Donor Program. United Way contributions continue AFTH's mission to provide safe and loving homes for children and offer quality, comprehensive services to adoptive families, birth parents and children as well as our vision to be a leader in the field of adoption and family building

How to Make a Contribution to AFTH Through the United Way Donor Option Plan:

- 1) Request a Donor Option Card from your company's United Way representative.
- 2) The agency's donor number is different in each area. The AFTH donor number for your area can be found in your United Way booklet. You can do this even if it is not listed in your particular United Way booklet. Just print ADOPTIONS FROM THE HEART and the local branch office's address (see page 2) in the designated box for the donor area.
- 3) Enter the amount of your pledge and your payment method (check, payroll deduction, etc.)

Seeking Heart Holders to Reach Our 2016 Paper Heart Project Goal

Adoption brings people together in love, people who would have not otherwise crossed paths.



What is the AFTH Paper Heart Project?

Each November in honor of National Adoption Month, local businesses partner with AFTH to spread awareness about adoption through the Paper Heart Project. They offer their customers the chance to purchase a paper heart for \$1 and write their name on it in support of adoption. The business then displays the hearts all month long. The donations collected benefit the AFTH Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund which goes directly to help men and women working with AFTH who are struggling to provide for their basic needs. Every bit of help makes a big impact in the lives of the men and women we work with.

Reasons to Join the Paper Heart Project?

- 1: Spread adoption awareness in your community
- 2: Support local men & women in need

So How Can You Help?

Ask your local businesses to join in the fun or your child's karate or dance studio to participate. Invite your child's school or preschool to participate as a special project honoring National Adoption Month. Take hearts to work or to church to get your friends, family and coworkers involved in the project.

If you want to be a Heart Holder for our 2016 Paper Heart Project, sign up at www.afth.org/events/nam or contact Kellie Gaffney at KellieG@afth.org for more details.

Hearts will be available for purchase in AFTH's online store and in AFTH offices in addition to participating businesses starting November 1st.

Domestic Program Update

We were so excited to see so many new as well as veteran families attend at our summer picnics. It is always an honor for AFTH staff to witness all of the reunions taking place between families and birth parents. Thank you to all our wonderful picnic sponsors and to all those who purchased raffle tickets. Because of your generosity, we were able to raise over \$1500 for the Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund which will help make an incredible impact in the lives of men and women in need.

Special Note

The Annual Fort Washington, PA Picnic has been moved back to the traditional first Sunday in June and will be held on June 4th, 2017.

Save the Date

Casino Royale “Betting on a Better Future”

This coming November, in order to kick off National Adoption Month, AFTH will be hosting our 1st Casino Royale event with the proceeds benefiting the Birth Parent Scholarship Fund. Because the casino portion of AFTH’s 30th Anniversary event “Building Beautiful Futures” last October was such a hit, we decided to host a special casino night this year. The event will raise funds so that AFTH can award more scholarships to young men and women who are working so hard to obtain their education goals. The event will be held at the Clothier Room just a stone’s throw away from our Wynnewood Office outside of Philadelphia on November 5th. More details will be coming soon.

If you are interested in learning more about corporate sponsorships available or if you have something that you would like to donate for the raffles (sports tickets, weekend at vacation home, new electronics, zoo tickets, etc) contact Kellie Gaffney at KellieG@afth.org.

New Payment Options for Families

In order to better accommodate families, AFTH will now be accepting ACH bank transfers as a method of payment in addition to checks for many of the

fees including: application, home study, educational course, travel, program fee and emergency placement fees. An invoice will be emailed to families with a payment link. There is an additional charge of \$.50 per ACH transaction. Escrow fees for placement, post placement and medical and miscellaneous can be submitted by certified checks, ACH or wire (bank fee applies on each wire). Our banking information will be provided to families upon request for ACH and wire transfers.

Fiscal Year Statistics

Our 2015-2016 fiscal year concluded successfully with a total of 154 infant placements which included 3 special needs placements, 3 sets of twins, and 4 identified cases and AFTH assisted 27 additional families with their home study only cases.

Our placement rate has averaged 6-8% of families in our books placed each month. As our placement rates continue to increase, that percentage will increase as well. The majority of families currently in the books **(62%) are waiting less than 1 year**. Families open to children of African-American heritage are seeing significantly shorter wait times with the majority of families **(66%) currently waiting 6 months or less**. Our emergency placements rate remains high with almost half (46%) of our placements over the past fiscal year being emergency placements.

AFTH Classes & Fall Gatherings

AFTH’s Fall Ed Series is just around the corner with many of our most popular classes again available (see newsletter insert). Space is often limited for the classes and so be sure to register so you don’t miss out. Additionally, a list of support groups can be found on page 11. AFTH offices host support groups for waiting families as well as expecting and birth parents. It can be extremely valuable to add allies to your support system who “get it” in ways those outside the adoption triad can never fully understand. Come together to share your experiences while also talking about any frustrations and concerns you may have. Find encouragement in a support groups of peers who are walking a similar path.

Specialized Education Course about Transracial Adoption

Join us for a free full-day education course specifically designed for families considering transracial adoption. Topics of discussion include the history of race and racism, privilege, talking to children about race and racism, helping adoptees feel connected to their heritage, hair and skincare, dealing with family members and friends who don't understand transracial adoption, and advice from transracial adoptees. This is a new course being offered by Adoptions From The Heart and so we welcome any families, waiting or recently placed through transracial adoption to attend.

Registration is Required.

Class will be held on **Saturday, October 1st from 9:30 -4:00pm** at the Banko Room at the Arts and Education Center at 25 West 3rd Street in **Bethlehem, PA** 18015.

Space is limited. Register online at www.afth.org/calendar
Contact AshleyK@afth.org or JennaS@afth.org for more details.



Several offices will also be hosting fall get-togethers this year. AFTH staff always enjoy gathering together with families and seeing the children grow.

Families are encouraged to also stay connected with AFTH by following us on social media.



Staff Anniversaries

Sophia Andujar, financial department, celebrated 10 years in January

Roberta Evantash, Supervisor & International Coordinator, celebrated 30 years in March

Heidi Gonzalez, Assistant Director, celebrated 30 years in April

Stephanie Cappriotti, CenPa Social Worker, celebrated 15 years in May

Partnership with Potbelly Sandwich Shop

Our Wynnewood Office was delighted when Potbelly Sandwich Shop moved in about a block away and we were even more thrilled when the General Manager contacted us with a special partnership opportunity. He wanted Adoptions From The Heart to be the recipient of donations during a special non-profit night at the Potbelly location in Wynnewood. So in June and July, AFTH received 25% of their income during a chosen day between the hours of 5-8pm. AFTH staff was able to mingle with Potbelly customers and share information about the agency and how their support helps make a difference.



Potbelly donated over \$140 this summer to benefit AFTH's Expecting and Birth Parent Support Fund. We are looking forward to our continued partnership in the year to come.



International Adoption News

AFTH prides itself on keeping abreast of news regarding inter-country adoption. The agency continues to provide Home Studies, Education, Post-Adoption/Placement Reports and Services, and other assistance in support of international adoptions, despite no longer having placement programs in foreign countries. AFTH collaborates with agencies across the United States that do provide inter-country adoption placement services. Contact your local AFTH office to see how we can help you with your adoption process, including referring you to one of these partner agencies. For details on AFTH's inter-country adoption services, contact Roberta Evantash at 610.642.7200 or RobertaE@afh.org.

China

The non-special needs matching process for this program has been at a standstill since January. The last referrals were placed with families whose LIDs (log in dates) were January 9, 2007. We have no further news about this but unfortunately it does not look promising.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The Department of State strongly recommends against adopting from the DRC because of the exit permit suspension.

Ghana

Ghana continues its moratorium on inter-country adoption aside from children with significant special needs, children being adopted by blood relatives and children with special circumstances approved by the Minister of Gender, Children and Special Protection.

Uganda

The Ugandan president signed into law amendments to the Children Act making inter-country adoption the last possible option available to children needing permanency.

USCIS Processing Fees

Increased fees are expected in the foreseeable future. When and if they will take effect is not known yet. The largest increase proposals are the fees for the Citizenship Application from \$600 to \$1,170 and the Replacement Certificate of Citizenship from \$345 to \$555. Adoption advocacy groups are discussing their concerns with USCIS.

U.S. Can Save Children by Upholding International Adoption Rights

Bipartisan representatives in Washington have co-sponsored a bill supporting the human rights of children worldwide. It is a bill consisting of only a few lines but it could have a profound effect. The bill essentially tells the State Department to stop discriminating against children through its refusal to consider the violations of human rights inherent in their unnecessary institutionalization. So many poor and devastated countries have shut down international adoption and in recent years the U.S. State Department has joined forces with UNICEF to limit international adoption. There has been a precipitous decline by 75% in the number of adoptions into the U.S. This bill would put the U.S. in the position of standing up for the human rights of un-parented children.



Upcoming Groups

Contact your office for details

ALLENTOWN - Contact our office for more details.
Call (610) 432-2384 or Email ChelseyP@afth.org

BROOKLYN, NY - Contact our office for more details.
Call (610) 432-2384 or Email ChelseyP@afth.org

CENTRAL PA - Waiting Family Support Group
Come together in support with AFTH staff and other waiting families. Our guest speakers will be a family who will share their experience with the wait, being selected, and their lengthy interstate experience.

Tuesday, Sept. 13th at 6:30pm

Call (717) 399-7766 or Email StephanieC@afth.org

CHERRY HILL - Birthmother Support Group
In addition to providing support to one another around adoption issues, birth mothers will be making jewelry with their child's birth stones. Pizza & soft drinks provided
Thursday, Sept. 8th at 6:00pm
Call (856) 665-5655 or Email ChrisotpherP@afth.org

CONNECTICUT - Contact our office for more details.
Call (860) 657-2626 or Email SusanM@afth.org

DELAWARE - Waiting Family Support Group
Waiting can be one of the hardest parts. Coming together with social workers and other waiting families who can provide support and encouragement can be very helpful.
Tuesday, Oct. 4th at 5:30pm
Call 302-658-8883 or Email DanielleG@afth.org

VIRGINIA - Contact our office for more details.
Call (757) 361-0008 or Email NicoleF@afth.org

PHILADELPHIA - Waiting Family Support Group
Join other waiting families for a time of support in getting through the wait. Share coping skills and experiences and meet friends who understand the journey.
Tuesday, September 13th at 6:30pm
Call 610-642-7200 or Email AshleyK@afth.org

PITTSBURGH - Birth Parent Support Group
If you are considering adoption or have placed your child for adoption through AFTH, come together with other birth parents who can really "get it" for support.
Sunday, Oct. 2nd at 1:00pm
Call 724-853-6533 or Email JoanS@afth.org

Congratulations to AFTH's New Families

Sons

Matthew & Allison

Christopher & Ericka

James & Anne

Laith & Torrey (*twin boy & girl*)

Patrick & Marne

Pasquale & Laura

Kenneth & Laura

Travis & Kathleen

John & Megan

Derek & Jennifer

Pablo & Jennifer

Michael & Kristen



Daughters

Christopher & Lauren

Nathan & Victoria

Robert & Sara

Jacqueline & Rhonda

James & Shea

Michael & Lauren

Joseph & Jennifer

Laith & Torrey (*twin boy & girl*)

Charles & Bethany

Robyn

John & Travis

Sean & Elizabeth

Charles & Maura

Christopher & Jaime

Dominic & Kayla





NON-PROFIT
ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT # 136
WAYNE, PA

*30-31 Hampstead Circle
Wynnewood, PA 19096*



or current resident

Is Our Mailing List Current?

Are your name and address incorrect? Want to be removed from mailings? Are you receiving more than one copy? Let us know: adoption@afth.org

Adoption News is a publication of Adoptions From The Heart, a private, non-profit, licensed agency.

Events & Conferences

Recently Attended:

NYSCC Conference in Albany, NY
NASW Conference in Cromwell, CT
Lehigh Valley Pride in the Park in Allentown, PA

**Visit our table at the upcoming events:
Go to www.afth.org for event details.**

September 22nd-24th

NCEA Conference in New Orleans, LA

September 24th

DELMED Conference in Lewes, DE

September 29th

Community Partners' Day 2016 in Norfolk, VA

October 6th

PA Conference for Women in Philadelphia, PA

October 20th

Shevlin Family Foundation Recovery Benefit in Media, PA

November 5th

Adoption Fair in Guilderland, NY.

November 20th

APC Conference in Brooklyn, NY



FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

*LEARN ABOUT AFTH'S PROGRAM
FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR HOME*

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

SEPT 6TH AND OCT 4TH AT 7PM

Registration Required

www.afth.org